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Sustainable development: implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

Report of the Second Committee*

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I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 20 (see A/73/538, para. 2). Action on sub-item (e) was taken at the 23rd and 25th meetings, on 8 and 28 November 2018. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records.[1]

II. Consideration of draft resolutions A/C.2/73/L.38 and A/C.2/73/L.44

2. At the 23rd meeting, on 8 November, the representative of Egypt, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa" (A/C.2/73/L.38).

3. At its 25th meeting, on 28 November, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa" (A/C.2/73/L.44), submitted by the Vice-Chair

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[1] A/C.2/73/SR.23 and A/C.2/73/SR.25.

of the Committee, Mehdi Remaoun (Algeria), on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.38.

4. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.44 had no programme budget implications.

5. Also at its 25th meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.44 (see para. 8).

6. At the same meeting, a statement was made by the representative of the United States of America.

7. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.44, draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.38 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

III. Recommendation of the Second Committee

8. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 72/220 of 20 December 2017, as well as other resolutions relating to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[1]

Reaffirming its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, and its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Recalling that, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community committed to combating desertification, restoring degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and striving to achieve a land degradation-neutral world by 2030,

Acknowledging that action to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and achieve a land degradation-neutral world can deliver multiple benefits and that land degradation neutrality has the potential to act as an accelerator for achieving Sustainable Development Goals and as a catalyst for attracting sustainable development financing and climate finance to implement the Convention,

Reaffirming its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

Bearing in mind its resolution 62/195 of 19 December 2007, in which it declared the decade 2010–2020 as the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification, and its resolution 64/201 of 21 December 2009, in which it designated the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

Africa, as the focal point of the Decade, and invited States parties to the Convention, observers and other relevant stakeholders to organize activities to observe the Decade,

Welcoming the Paris Agreement,[2] and encouraging all its parties to fully implement the Agreement, and parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[3] that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible,

Highlighting the synergies between the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, and noting with concern the scientific findings contained in the special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, entitled "Global Warming of 1.5°C",

Looking forward to the Climate Summit called for by the Secretary-General, to be held in New York in 2019, to accelerate global action on climate change,

Welcoming the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030,[4] and acknowledging that all types of forests provide essential ecosystem services, such as timber, food, fuel, fodder, non-wood products and shelter, as well as soil and water conservation and clean air, that the sustainable management of forests and trees outside forests is vital to the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and that all forests prevent land degradation and desertification and reduce the risk of floods, landslides and avalanches, droughts, sand and dust storms and other disasters,

Taking note of the *Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration*[5] of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, which reaffirms the global dimension of land degradation and reconfirms the economic sense of urgent and concerted action and investment in avoiding land degradation and the restoration of degraded lands,

Noting that combating desertification, land degradation and drought, including through sustainable land management, can contribute to easing forced migration flows influenced by a number of factors, including economic, social, security and environmental concerns, which can, in turn, reduce current and potential fighting over resources in degraded areas,

Encouraging countries to give due consideration to the dissemination, promotion and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security,[6]

Recognizing that drought resilience is an important element in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, as well as of target 15.3 on land degradation neutrality,[7]

Highlighting the important role of civil society in the implementation of the Convention and its 2018–2030 Strategic Framework,[8]

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[2] Adopted under the UNFCCC in FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21.

[3] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

[4] See resolution 71/285.

[5] Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (Bonn, Germany, 2018).

[6] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, document CL 144/9 (C 2013/20), appendix D.

[7] See resolution 70/1.

[8] ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1, decision 7/COP.13, annex.

Recognizing that sand and dust storms can be exacerbated by desertification, land degradation and drought and that sustainable land management in the context of land degradation neutrality, including land management and sustainable water use, can contribute to effective responses to sand and dust storms,

Welcoming the fact that 119 States have subscribed to the voluntary land degradation neutrality target-setting programme under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

Recognizing the value of knowledge, education, science and new technology to sustainable development and good land management, including making use of, inter alia, the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, emphasizing the importance of science-based decision-making and that science and technology to combat desertification, land degradation and drought should therefore be further promoted, acknowledging the work of the Science-Policy Interface of the Convention, and welcoming the organization of the technology fair at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

Expressing deep concern about the continuous trend of land degradation, as reflected in the findings of the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018*,[9]

Reaffirming the importance of government leadership, multi-stakeholder partnerships and increasing private engagement for the sustainable management, restoration and rehabilitation of ecosystems, biodiversity and land,

Expressing its appreciation to the Government of China for hosting the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Ordos, China, from 6 to 16 September 2017,

Noting with appreciation the global observance event to mark the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, held in Quito on 17 June 2018 on the theme "Land has true value — Invest in it",

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 72/220 on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;[10]

2. *Affirms* that achieving land degradation neutrality would serve as an accelerator and integrator for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and as a catalyst for attracting sustainable development financing and climate finance to implement the Convention, and respond to the overall objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;[6]

3. *Encourages* the organizations of the United Nations system, when designing and implementing their programmes and projects, to take into account the role of land degradation neutrality as a potential accelerator of Sustainable Development Goals;

4. *Invites* Member States to support efforts to implement the strategic objective of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those

[9] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.I.6.
[10] A/73/255, sect. II.

Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[1] on drought;

5. *Welcomes* the outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[11] as well as the launch of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, a global impact investment vehicle for projects addressing land degradation, and takes note with appreciation of the launch of the first edition of *Global Land Outlook*,[12] which provides, among other things, an assessment of the state of land globally as well as solutions for the sustainable management of land resources to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

6. *Takes note with appreciation* of the adoption of the Ordos Declaration at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention urging countries to step up efforts on all fronts to tackle desertification, land degradation and drought, which are seen as major environmental, economic and social challenges for global sustainable development;[13]

7. *Recognizes* the importance of applying new and innovative technologies, enabling policies and approaches, as well as sharing best practices, in combating desertification, land degradation and drought, and requests the Secretary-General to identify those technologies, enabling policies and best practices in his report on the implementation of the present resolution;

8. *Underlines* the importance of comprehensive reporting, follow-up and review at the global, national and regional levels, as appropriate, in order to track progress in the implementation of the Convention, to ensure that its overall objectives to reverse desertification and mitigate the effects of drought to achieve sustainable development in the affected areas are duly attained;

9. *Takes note*, as appropriate, of the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, at its thirteenth session, to promote the positive role that measures taken to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, can play in addressing desertification, land degradation and drought as one of the drivers that can cause migration, and invites all stakeholders to take note of this when addressing drivers of migration within the ongoing processes;

10. *Underlines* the need to address the economic, social and environmental impacts of climate change, and emphasizes the need for national and international action to enhance efforts to build resilience;

11. *Encourages* the public and private sectors to continue to invest in developing, adapting and scaling up the application of technologies, enabling policies, methods and tools to combat desertification, land degradation and drought in different regions, and to boost knowledge exchange, including of traditional knowledge with the consent of the knowledge holders, capacity-building and sharing of technologies on mutually agreed terms;

12. *Encourages* developed countries party to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, to actively support the efforts of developing countries party to the Convention in promoting sustainable land management practices and in seeking to achieve a land degradation-neutral world by providing

[11] ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1.

[12] Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Bonn, Germany, 2017).

[13] Ibid., decision 27/COP.13, annex.

substantial financial resources, facilitated access to appropriate technology and other forms of support, including through capacity-building measures;

13. *Welcomes* the adoption of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the Convention, including a new strategic objective on drought, and strongly encourages the parties to the Convention to apply and align with the Strategic Framework in their national policies, programmes, plans and processes relating to desertification, land degradation and drought, including in their national action programmes, as appropriate, and to implement the Strategic Framework, taking into account the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development;[14]

14. *Recognizes* that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls remains a crucial contribution to the effective implementation of the Convention, including its 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, and to the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, welcomes the adoption of the Gender Action Plan by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its thirteenth session, and calls upon parties to the Convention and partners to pursue the equal participation of women and men in planning, decision-making and implementation at all levels and to further promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in desertification, land degradation and drought-related policies and activities as a means to strengthen the effective and efficient implementation of action on the ground;

15. *Invites* multilateral and bilateral partners to support parties to the Convention in the implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the Convention;

16. *Encourages* parties to the Convention to continue to promote the prevention of desertification, land degradation and drought with an integrated landscape approach, including the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded land and sustainable land management;

17. *Calls upon* parties to the Convention to enhance and support the preparation of drought preparedness policies on, inter alia, early warning systems, vulnerability and risk assessment, as well as drought risk mitigation measures;

18. *Welcomes* target 15.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world,[6] and takes note with appreciation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality target setting programme under the Convention and the work of the secretariat of the Convention and partners to assist States in carrying out voluntary target setting activities, and in this respect invites States that have not yet subscribed to the programme to do so;

19. *Notes with appreciation* the financial contributions that have been made by States and other donors towards the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, and invites States and other donors to make further contributions;

20. *Invites* more investment aimed at the operationalization of the voluntary land degradation neutrality target setting programme and the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund as an innovative funding scheme to finance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including for the achievement of a land degradation-neutral world;

[14] Resolution 69/313, annex.

21. *Recognizes* the benefits gained from cooperation through the sharing of climate and weather information, forecasting and early warning systems related to desertification, land degradation and drought, while also taking account of dust and sand storms, at the global, regional and subregional levels, and in this regard likewise recognizes the need for further cooperation between parties to the Convention and relevant organizations in the sharing of related information, forecasting and early warning systems;

22. *Encourages* the United Nations system to harness opportunities for leveraging synergies among the Convention on Biological Diversity,[15] the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[3] and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in this respect welcomes the ongoing efforts to strengthen synergies among the secretariats of the aforementioned conventions;

23. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, and decides to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-fourth session, under the item entitled "Sustainable development", the sub-item entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa", unless otherwise agreed.

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[15] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.